

Faith Formation Meeting – 7/15/20 – Amanda Bleichty

Notes by Kathy Haake

- Living in a hybrid society for a while and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.
- We have figured out worship online, but what are we going to do with “the rest” of church? Sunday school, gatherings, etc.
- We have a lot of opportunities and possibilities that can make our faith formation much better.
- Programming has been a tradition focus. We’ve been using it as a guiding force; now programming can’t guide us. Need to focus more on figuring out our true **goals**. Some examples of things churches might be focused on:
 - How do we develop disciples?
 - How do we encourage morality?
 - How do we give people opportunities to use their gifts?
- Once we identify goals, then we can make programs to fit.
- No church is unique in this challenge. We are all in the situation of trying to figure out what faith formation looks like.
- Don’t try to do too much. You can’t do everything, and neither can the families you are ministering to.
- Figure out what works and focus on those things.
- What are the best things our congregation can do? Not all congregations can tackle the same approaches.
- If we can help faith formation happen *where people live* that is the best thing that will come out of this situation.
- Some resources:
 - Vibrant Faith Catalyst: vibrant-faith-catalyst.mn.co
 - Guide to hybrid faith formation
 - What you should have on your website, making playlists (lesson plan: videos, things to read, etc.), ideas for doing less things and doing them well.
 - The Bible Project: bibleproject.com

- Curriculum ideas:
 - Digital Shine curriculum: <https://shinecurriculum.com/shine-digital/> Shine at Home / Shine Connect = Available Aug. 1
 - Meetinghouse curriculum: videos <http://kidsandyouth.themeetinghouse.com/>
 - God's Story, God's Song curriculum – College Mennonite Church: <https://www.godsstorygodssong.com/why-projects.html#/>
 - Springs Forth: Detectives of Divinity: <http://springsforth.com/products/>
- Focus on faith formation happening at home.
- See this as an opportunity to expand the way we do church to those who don't learn in the way that we used to focus on.
- The church was changing anyway, so this is just forcing us to change in a new way.

What are churches doing?

- First Mennonite Mountain Lake – Zoom w/ Anabaptist Prayer Service + Scripture for the uniform series. Sunday school instead of sermon.
- Salem-Zion – Discussing how to handle child dedication service. Waiting? Do it as a small group and record it and show it? Catechism for high school? Problem is the energy level to think outside the box is hard to find. What is the one or two things we can do and do well. They have Tuesday night “Zoom with the Pastor” meetings with kids.
- Bethesda – Online Zoom catechism. Encouraged one parent to join each week. Allows the parents to share about their experiences as well, which has been meaningful. Experimenting with VBS curriculum, helping people where they live—faith at home venture. Creating weekly videos (eat – worship – talk): reading scripture, conversations on themes, memorizing scripture; transforming the conversation at home. Zoom interviews with Bible characters. Put together snack packs for people who were participating. Anyone can use, though they would like people to let them know if they are. Just study individual stories directly from the Bible, especially with high school. bmcfaithformation.com
- Carol Dierksen – Springs Forth VBS curriculum. Creating “playlist” for families to access. Tabor Mennonite / can get by emailing secretary: kfunk@tabormennonite.org
- Concerned about getting away from curriculum, especially with the divisive political climate, because the teachers might not stick to anabaptist principles. But Shine isn't enough for the upper elementary / high school group.

- Christ Community Des Moines – Moving things to house churches, small group settings. PracticingtheWay.org. Spiritual practices for small groups. Meeting outside in driveways, etc., in groups of around 10-15 people. Geographically proximate so they can share life together. Used to do service projects, food sharing, sermon reflection, etc. No in-person full worship; FB live.
- Mailed out Shine. Tried to get teachers to connect in ways like send letters, etc.
- Questions about Senior High classes—what curriculum are people using? (Claim(ing) Faith, Generation Why?, etc.)
- After-bedtime Bible or book study for adults with children?
- Maybe do every other week online with activities (playlists) in between for families/ households/individuals to do in the meantime. Maybe do less, but do it well!
- What do we do for people who have no internet access? Particularly when they are the most vulnerable?

How are people handling online safety with interacting with kids?

- No one had much to say.
- People had thought they *should* be focused on it but haven't had the energy to put into it.
- Do we follow along with school guidance?
- Central Plains linked to resources:
 - <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/covid-19-resources.html>
 - Including to Dove's Nest: <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/resources-for-families.html>
 - [Keeping Kids Safe With Virtual Learning](#)
 - [Doves Nest Resources](#)
- Dovesnest COVID page + blog post links in chat & suggest recording classes, especially if they can't do 2 adults.

Amanda is available if people have specific questions, or want to talk through ideas, or are looking for resources. Call her at 319-325-4522 or email at amandableichty@centralplainsmc.org.